

# Reporting Truth while Respecting Privacy

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## Reporting on Missing Persons

Journalists are faced with the challenge of privacy when deciding to report on missing persons. The code of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists states that minimizing harm and respecting privacy are some of the key principles of journalism.

Focusing more on the aspect of privacy issues regarding a missing person, the journalists' duty is to show compassion for these people and minimize harm to those affected personally by the story. This is why a journalist has to take the proper steps in reporting missing persons.

Another factor of following the principle of privacy is paying attention to the changing laws of each area they are in, because some states or regions have differing laws. Access to information on a person could be more or less limited depending on where you are. By following all of these steps, the missing person's privacy will be respected and upheld.

- When gathering information on a missing person, be careful of their privacy
- Take the proper steps in retrieving information on the person from families or the police
- Contact family members or friends for more information on the missing person
- Journalists observe changing privacy laws with each region or state
- Ask yourself if the information you are sharing on the missing person is vital to them being found

## Naming sexual assault victims after the #MeToo Movement

### Abstract

Historically, the press has almost always adhered to an unspoken rule of not publishing the names of sexual assault victims without their permission. However with the context of the #MeToo Movement the

The impact of printing names has the potential to spark a social revolution. It also has the possibility to end in the victim of the assault being harassed and shamed. Although the wake of the #MeToo Movement has shown the positive impact that naming sexual assault victims can have, the implications and safety of the victim still takes precedence.

### Potential Implications

Sexual assault victims continue to face the extraneous burden of dealing with shame and harassment. Seeing the negative effects of speaking out may deter other victims from stepping forward. On the other hand, in the case of the #MeToo movement, journalists have the opportunity to effect social change. This could encourage more victims to come forward.

### Guidelines

Give the readers as much information as possible. Explain the story in detail and with context. Provide a vague description of the victim, without identifying them.

Always speak to the victim before publication, both to uncover truth, and to warn them of potential consequences. Even if they are not named they are still the subject of the story. Understand the demographics of a publication when considering how much detail to use.

Word choice is crucial, making sure that the story is accurate, but is not unnecessarily informing readers about a traumatic experience.

Talk about the greater issue, and how it applies to the public and possible solutions

## Naming Suspects of a Crime

While reporting on cases before any determination of guilt has been made, journalists must decide what is ethically right to do. The decision to name people involved in certain situations is sometimes controlled by law, but more often by societal conventions. In some cases, journalists may even take a calculated risk in terms of the law if they believe that identifying someone is to the public's benefit. It has been said that most journalists do not publish the names of suspects until they've been charged with a crime. However, in major cases, the information reporters gather makes it clear to the audience that a person of interest is a suspect and authorities are preparing to seek charges, even if those charges haven't yet been filed.

**Q:** *Why publish a suspect's name before he/she is charged?*

**A:** Sometimes, other media outlets will reveal the suspect prior to one channels reporting, so it's only fair to accurately report what you know.

**Q:** *Should a reporter wait until a suspect is charged to name him in their reports?*

**A:** Once a reporter is sure of their information, they shouldn't consider holding off on identifying a suspect.

**Q:** *Does a name of a suspect as opposed to the details add anything to the telling of the story?*

**A:** Yes, in the case of a formal charge by the police or a trial, it is part of the public record and central to holding both the system and it's participants accountable.

**Q:** *What if the suspect ends up not guilty?*

**A:** No one rule fits all circumstances. However, reporters aim to reach a thoughtful decision based on the facts available.